

# thr@ll

Anarchist news and views from Aotearoa/NZ.....#17 Jan/Feb 2001 FREE

## war on the waterfront

### A DECLARATION OF WAR

**I**n November wood industry giant Carter Holt Harvey (CHH) declared war on South Island wharfies by beginning its attempts to introduce on-call, casual labour to replace the unionised, permanent workers who loaded their logs onto ships. CHH has given its own puppet union/company, the Tauranga-based "Mainland" Stevedoring Union, the job of signing up scab workers from the North Island prepared to toil on a casual basis for lower pay than the southern wharfies. "Mainland" Stevedoring's sponsor has its eyes firmly on the prize of a totally casualised waterfront workforce, and has thus been happy to fly the scabs south and pay for their accommodation in hotels and motels.

CHH, which is New Zealand's second-largest company, recently announced yearly earnings of \$176 million, up 214% from last year, leading trade unionist and wharfies supporter Paul Goultier to remark that "this is not a struggling company which needs to penny pinch. It is a company which does not need to cut corners by employing casual labour on an as-needed basis, working long shifts with insufficient breaks." The fear is that capitalist companies like CHH want to bring back waterfront conditions of 50 years ago, when they could pick and choose labour from yellow unions, and that this sort of "casualisation" eventually could be visited upon the whole workforce in Aotearoa.

### THE COUNTER OFFENSIVE

Wharfies have not taken CHH's attacks lying down: since November they have organised dozens of pickets of CHH ships in Bluff, Port Chalmers, Timaru and Nelson. These pickets have often lasted the 48 hours it takes to loading or unload a shipment of logs, and have been typically attended by 100-200 people. Picketers have included the families of wharfies, other unionists, radical activists and members of the communities CHH has attacked.

These pickets seem to have widespread support in the local community, which is excellent for small, conservative, provincial towns. For example, in Port Chalmers some residents and local businesses have given free food, beer and accommodation to

picketing unionists and their supporters, whilst shunning out of town scabs. Even the Port Chalmers Community Board has voted to support the wharfies.

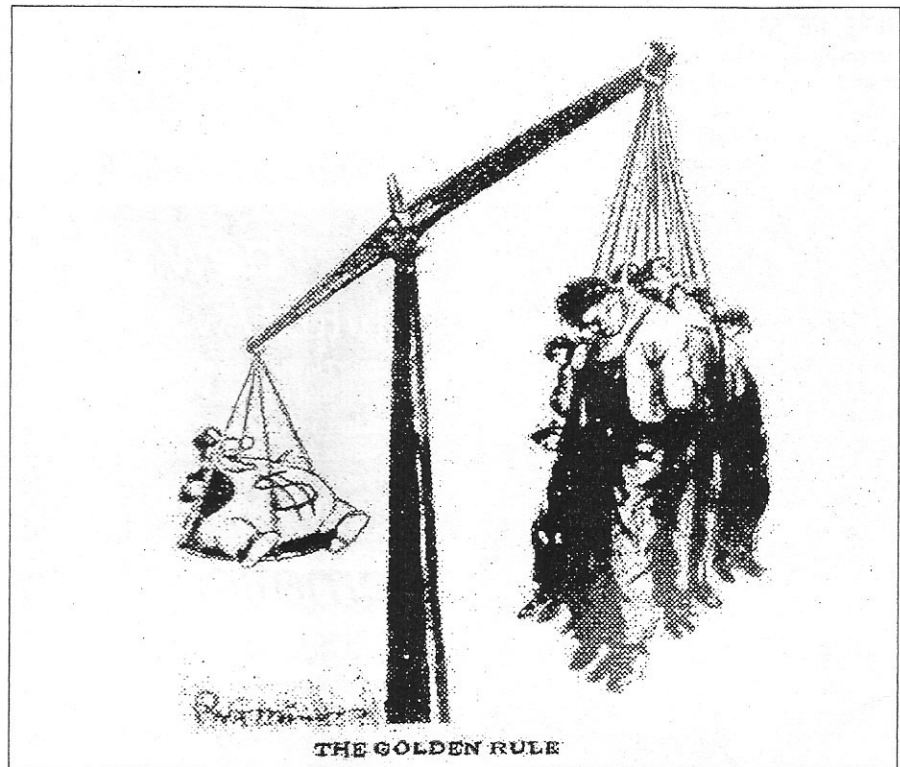
Demonstrations of solidarity with the wharfies have occurred in other parts of New Zealand and internationally. In early December Carters building suppliers stores were picketed from Auckland to Invercargill, and near Christmas there was a protest outside CHH's head office in Auckland. There have also been some attempts to boycott Carters retail stores and products and Carter-derived products like Treasure's disposable nappies, Softex tissues, Libra tampons, Handees paper towels, and Purex toilet paper. Internationally, Korean watersiders have instigated

"go-slows" when unloading logs from CHH ships in Korea, and the Maritime Union of Australia, which three years ago fought its own, largely successful battle against casualisation, has shared its experiences with the wharfies and their Watersiders Workers' Union (WWU).

### WAR ON TWO FRONTS?

The wharfies' spirited pickets have tended to succumb to baton-wielding cops using "flying wedges" to "escort" vehicles containing scab labour to CHH ships. Dissatisfaction with leaders of the WWU and the umbrella Council of Trade Unions (CTU), leaders who seem to want only the sort of "symbolic" pickets which stand to

*cont. on page four*



inside: report from the picket-line – 50th anniversary of the 1951 lockout – eminem and prolephobia

# introducing: thr@ll

**T**hr@ll magazine is published by an independent collective of anarchists currently living in Wellington and Christchurch, Aotearoa/New Zealand. It was launched as a monthly in July 1998 and changed to its current bi-monthly format in April 1999.

Members of the editorial collective point to anarchist communism, anarcho-syndicalism, situationism and council communism as their major influences. As a group, however, we align ourselves with no particular tendency, preferring to use terms like "class-struggle anarchism" to describe our collective politics. This non-sectarian approach is reflected in the magazine itself, which aims to cover a wide range of anarchist-related news and views of interest to people living in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

## WHERE WE STAND

Anarchism is neither an individual lifestyle nor some abstract philosophy found only in textbooks, nor is it a programme to be implemented in the distant future. It is the ongoing, collective struggle of people everywhere to gain control of their own lives.

As anarchists, we oppose all forms of social, economic and political exploitation. We oppose capitalism, as it is based on the exploitation of one class (the working class) by another (the ruling class). We also oppose ecological destruction and all forms of discrimination, whether it be on the grounds of colour, culture, gender, sexual orientation, age or health.

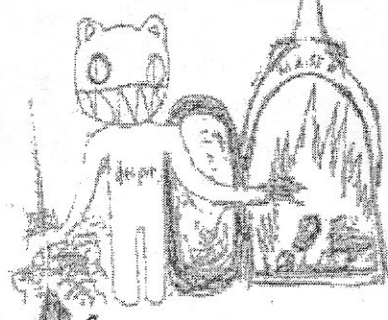
We support grassroots, collective, direct action aimed at abolishing all forms of exploitation and creating in their place a decentralised, libertarian-communist

society; that is, a classless, stateless and moneyless society, free of wage-labour and based on mutual aid and direct participatory democracy. Such a society should be organised in accordance with the principle "to each according to their needs, from each according to their ability".

We want the maximum possible freedom for each individual, but not at the expense of others. We recognise that because humans are social beings, freedom for all (social equality) is the necessary condition for the freedom of each.

We do not support vanguardism, the creation of "workers' states" or any other attempt to impose a new society from the top down. We believe workers and other exploited people should act together using non-hierarchical methods to free themselves from exploitation. We see the building up of revolutionary unions and/or the spontaneous creation of workers' councils and neighbourhood councils in revolutionary situations as possible means of bringing about a libertarian communist society.

— Thr@ll Editorial Collective (from the new Thr@ll website).



furnace for the burning of money

*thr@ll*

PO Box 22-076 Christchurch,  
Aotearoa/New Zealand.  
e-mail: thrallnet@yahoo.com  
website: <http://www.freespeech.org/thrall/>

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## anarchist/libertarian socialist contacts

**Christchurch:**  
Anarchist Round Table, PO Box 22-076,  
Christchurch, e-mail: blackmail97@yahoo.com

**Wellington:**  
Committee for the Establishment of Civilisation,  
The State Adversary and the Freedom Shop, PO  
Box 9263, Te Aro, Wellington, e-mail:  
cec@mad.scientist.com, website: <http://www.tao.ca/~cec/>

Libertarian Communists, c/- PO Box 6387, Te  
Aro, Wellington, e-mail: libcommies@yahoo.co.nz

**Hamilton:**  
BORG, PO Box 9437, Hamilton, e-mail:  
borg@disinfo.net

**Auckland:**  
Class War, PO Box 78-104, Grey Lynn, Auckland,  
e-mail: classwar@rome.com

3rd Eye collective, 5/57 Park Rd., Grafton,  
Auckland, e-mail: euphemiak@yahoo.com or  
mbellard@ihug.co.nz  
website: [http://www.geocities.com/the\\_third\\_eye\\_website/](http://www.geocities.com/the_third_eye_website/)

## new thr@ll website

<http://www.freespeech.org/thrall/>

**F**inally, Thr@ll has a website! Now we can offer a bit more detail to the politics behind Thr@ll that you can't fit into an eight-page news zine. The website contains loads of nice and intriguing pics (as always), current and back issues of Thr@ll magazine, some texts readers may be interested in, a history page with links to radical New Zealand and revolutionary history, and extensive links to like minded groups and magazines around the world. Thanks heaps to G. for all the work he has done in putting up the website. Excellent job.

## international news round up

### protests against bush

**T**ens of thousands of demonstrators, including several hundred members of a Revolutionary Anti-Authoritarian Bloc, descended on Washington DC on January 20 for what turned out to be the largest anti-inaugural protest since the beginning of the second term of Richard Nixon in 1973. Despite heavy security, which included checkpoints and over 7,000 police officers, secret service agents and members of the national guard, most of the demonstrators made it through to the route of the inauguration parade in time to greet President George W. Bush with chants, missiles and placards with slogans such as "Hail to the Thief" and "Free Mumia Abu-Jamal". The president's motorcade was forced to speed past several sections of the parade route where demonstrators outnumbered Bush supporters, and Bush's limousine was hit by at least one egg along the way.

Forum later the same week. Thousand of demonstrators were stopped on Switzerland's borders, and Davos itself was virtually cut off from the rest of the country. Swiss authorities had threatened to combat any protests by firing liquid manure at demonstrators, but they were forced to resort to more traditional weapons (water cannon, tear gas and rubber bullets) after Swiss farmers refused to hand over to police the necessary "ammunition". Most Swiss newspapers and many residents criticised the security operation as excessive. The US State Department had earlier warned Americans not to visit Davos during the forum as it would be too dangerous.

### zlin eleven victorious

**T**he three-year legal and political battle for justice for eleven anarchists and antifascists charged with assault after a 1998 incident in the Czech city of Zlin has ended in almost total victory for the accused. On January 8th, eight of the eleven defendants were acquitted, the remaining three receiving suspended jail sentences (see Thr@ll # 6). A info.

### protests against WEF, davos

**S**ecurity was even tighter in the Swiss resort of Davos for the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum.



## *libertarian socialism and authoritarian socialism*

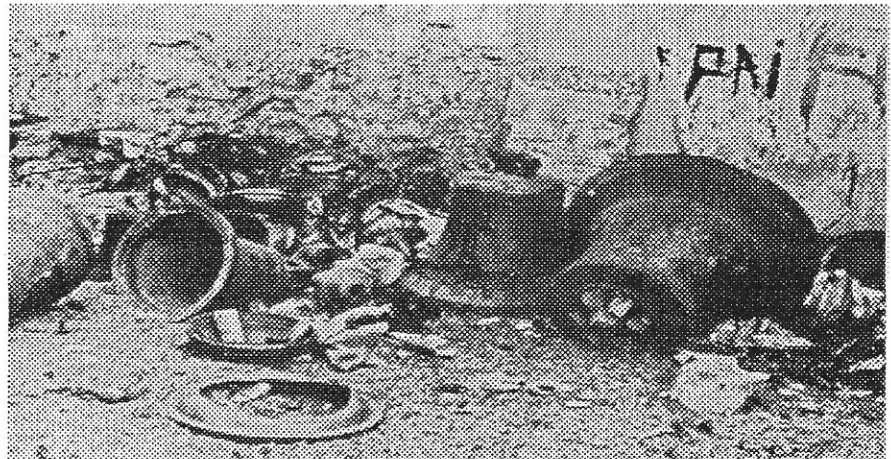
**S**ocialist Worker, the newspaper of the Socialist Workers Organisation (SWO), recently featured an "exposé" of anarchism entitled "Marxism and Anarchism" (*Socialist Worker*, December 4, 2000). The article is attributed to Kevin Ovenden, but is in fact an edited version of a diatribe which originally appeared in the British *Socialist Worker* (published by the SWO's sister organisation, the Socialist Workers Party). The article sets out to prove that by rejecting authority, centralism, unity and leadership, anarchism is unable to provide what the working class needs in order to overthrow capitalism, that is, "a clear and determined revolutionary party". This is done by using a series of historical examples, most of which are in fact distortions of actual events. These distortions are addressed in a lengthy response to the original article which can be found on the Internet at <http://www.infoshop.org/texts/swp.html> (send us some stamps if you'd like a printed version). Despite these distortions, however, the *Socialist Worker* article does highlight some key differences between the approaches of authoritarian and libertarian socialists.

The article begins by rather simplistically defining anarchism as "a rejection of all authority". Although many anarchists would not have a problem with such a definition, it is open to misinterpretation as a complete rejection of any rules or order. The author adds to the confusion by suggesting that authority, centralisation and unity are the same thing. "For anarchists, any form of centralisation or leadership is a type of authority, which is oppressive. But it is impossible to build a strong and effective campaign if, after people have come together to plan action, individuals then go off and do something different. We always need to take the best ideas and act on them in a united way." The suggestion here seems to be that coordination and unity can only be achieved through centralisation, that is, through the concentration of power in the hands of a minority.

## DECENTRALISED COORDINATION

Anarchists reject the centralisation of power because it takes power away from the people at the base. Instead they propose decentralised or federal structures, in which individuals or delegates from autonomous groups come together to coordinate activities while ensuring that ultimate power remains at the grassroots level. Anarchists have worked using these methods for over 150 years, making and implementing agreements and coordinating activities without any central body or leadership. To claim that anarchists have a problem with sticking to agreements that have been formed as the result of a truly democratic process is ridiculous.

The author then goes on to suggest that "democratic workers' organisations" such as workers councils are examples of "authori-



tarian" alternatives to the capitalist state. "Militant mass strikes throw up an alternative form of authority to the capitalist state. Many times over the last 150 years, democratic bodies, like strike committees or workers councils, have taken over organising 'state functions' – running transport, food distribution, defence of picket lines and workers' areas from the police and army and so on. Socialists argue that these democratic workers' organisations need to take power from the capitalists and break up their state. This happened in Russia in October 1917 in a revolution led by the Bolshevik Party."

WORKERS' COUNCILS, NOT  
A WORKERS' STATE

Anarchists agree that workers should take power from the capitalists and break up their state. This is why most anarchists (who traditionally view anarchism as a type of socialism) have always supported the formation of the kinds of democratic bodies mentioned above. The difference between anarchists and authoritarian socialists like the SWO is that while anarchists believe

overthrown after a series of strikes and confrontations that took the Bolshevik Party by surprise. Workers held meetings and began spontaneously forming soviets, or workers councils, to coordinate the struggle of the factories on strike. These were exactly the kinds of “democratic workers organisations” the SWO purportedly supports, yet far from leading this revolution, the Bolshevik Party actually opposed it!

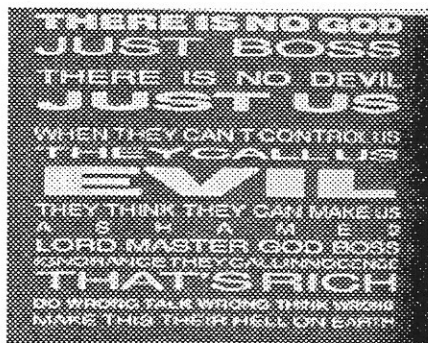
ALL POWER TO THE SOVIETS, NOT  
THE BOLSHEVIK ELITE

By February 24, half of Petrograd was on strike. But the local Bolsheviks told the strikers to go back to work. Luckily for the Russian workers, and unfortunately for the Tsar, the Bolsheviks were ignored. The Bolshevik Party, a minority organisation, eventually took power in a coup in October 1917, and soon set about taking control away from the workers' organisations. Although they were to govern in the name of the soviets, in fact the Bolsheviks had no faith in the ability of workers to run the factories on their own. Self-managed factory committees were replaced with appointed, autocratic managers, and democratically elected trade union leaders were replaced with loyal followers of Lenin and Trotsky. The workers councils became little more than rubber-stamps for the Bolshevik government. Real power rested with the central government, just as it had before the revolution. All the October revolution managed to do was replace one group of leaders with another, halting the revolution in its tracks.

The author asserts that the SWO is "democratic because its members constantly debate what is happening in today's struggles and the lessons that can be applied from past ones". Yet this is an organisation that would have us repeat the mistakes of the Russian Revolution, only with the SWO taking on the role of the Bolsheviks.

Anarchists, on the other hand, were quick to learn the real lesson from the Russian Revolution: that true democracy can only exist when everyone, not just a tiny elite at the top, has control over how society is run.

- Max



these bodies can organise a revolution and run society by themselves, authoritarian socialists believe these bodies need to be led by a centralised, hierarchical party, which usually means replacing the capitalist state with an equally authoritarian “workers’ state”, controlled not by workers but by party bureaucrats.

This is actually what happened in Russia in 1917. In February 1917, the Tsar was

# from the picketline

a report from port chalmers/dunedin

"Capitalism was reasonably content under Hitler, happy under Mussolini, very happy under Franco and delirious under General Pinochet" – John Ralston Saul, *The Doubters Companion*.

In 1999, Mainland Stevedoring was formed and its management formed the Amalgamated Stevedores Union. Carter Holt Harvey award all of their tendered out loading contracts to Mainland, except in Lyttelton where they still use Broken Hill Proprieties, the local company, whose employees are Waterfront Workers' Union members. They (CHH) fly workers down from Tauranga, put them up in hotels and transport them around the South Island. In short, CHH are taking a punt in the short term to destroy workers conditions and representation with the aim of increasing profit margins in the medium to long term.

In the 1920s there was the corporatist movement. It became the fascist movement of the 30s. Today, fascism doesn't come in the night wearing brown shirts. It comes in reassuring paternal tones via TV advertisements etc. It expands because governments

see to it that economies are geared to corporate interests instead of societies. Corporate fascism has a *raison d'être*, the profit margin; a god at whose alter everything will be bled dry; available profits

broad based community support for the wharries, winning and then pushing forward. But opportunities are being missed.

As an analogy, imagine a game of football. The ball, the immediate issue, belongs to the wharries. The opposition is the Business Roundtable and CHH. You can gain the initiative...but over 90% of the guys in your team have elected a captain and refuse to handle any passes that don't come from him. So you have to pass the ball that way. He gives it away. Every time. And then passes out an order not to tackle the ball carrier. Or that's how it feels to me.

On the 27th of December Dunedin Activist Network (DAN) and others were yet again on the Port Chalmers picket. It is not a strike picket. The following dynamics are typical. Members from such diverse groups as the Alliance, the 'Wobblies', International Socialists, SWO, Service and Foodworker Union, anarchists...even just members of the public with no professed political angle had been calling for effective non-violent civil disobedience. Leaflets were handed out listing the basic "dos and don'ts" about sitdowns. Les Wells (WWU President based in Lyttelton) is against sit downs and



Protester holds up logging truck, Bluff, Dec. 9

extracted; withered husks discarded. So I'm at the pickets.

The port pickets are a possible focus for revealing aspects of the bigger picture to more people. But that involves, first, building

## war on the waterfront

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the side of the road and let vehicles past, has been growing amongst the wharries and their supporters. Recently popular political commentator Chris Trotter reflected this dissatisfaction by writing an open letter to the CTU leadership which criticised their low-key approach to the wharries' fight, and called for them to initiate a mass campaign of support for the South Islanders.

Chris Trotter is a social democrat, a co-founder of the Alliance (aka the New Labour Party), and his well-intentioned letter is full of the contradictions of social democracy. Chris condemns the CTU big wigs, yet goes cap in hand to them with his proposal for a "grassroots" campaign. He condemns the Employment Relations Act's bans on sympathy and secondary strikes, yet hopes for the people who wrote and implemented the Act – CTU and Labour leaders – to support any workers who defy these bans by striking in support of the wharries. Chris acknowledges the power and ruthlessness of the forces arrayed against the wharries and their supporters, yet recommends that we counter company goons and violent, biased cops with passiveist 'civil disobedience'. Undoubtedly the largest and most revealing contradiction in Chris's letter is contained in the call for his "grass roots" campaign to be "led from the

top" – i.e. centralised and administered – by CTU big wigs.

### LIB-LEFT RESPONSE

Anarchists and libertarian socialists have been fairly active in support of the wharries. In Port Chalmers, near Dunedin, they have been very busy on the picket lines (see the article above). In Auckland, libertarian leftists have pushed the issue onto the agenda of a local union and produced a poster publicising the call for a boycott of CHH-products (check it out at [http://www.geocities.com/the\\_third\\_eye\\_website\\_pdfs/carter.PDF](http://www.geocities.com/the_third_eye_website_pdfs/carter.PDF)). In Wellington the newly formed Libertarian Communists have held a public meeting on the subject of the links between the current dispute and the great 1951 Waterfront Lockout.

What libertarian leftists ought to do now is wade in to the broad debates taking place inside the left about suitable strategies and tactics for the waterfront battle. In opposition to the vanguardist, hierarchical ideas put forward by the social democrats and their parrots in the Leninist microparties, we need to argue for our ideas of militant direct action and decentralised democratic organising as the best route to a victory over CHH.

It is important to note that many of the

wharries and their supporters already share our views on strategy and tactics. Their impatience with the methods of the social democrats was vividly expressed recently in Nelson, when picketers simply ignored a union leader's megaphoned order to "stay calm and let the scabs through" and stepped into a direct confrontation with cops



Nelson picket line, January

wielding long batons. Other forms of direct action have appeared spontaneously in the course of the waterfront dispute. In Port Chalmers, for instance, some people have been busy swapping the barcodes on CHH logs in an effort to stuff up their cataloguing system and make loading more difficult. Around the South Island tyres on vehicles





refused to even give union members the choice of doing it. The captain 'gave the ball away'. The van drove in.

Later that day the union did finally agree to have a pre-picket tactics meeting in the New Year. In the evening Les was approached with the suggestion that everyone should go to the pub. Slowly. First one there buys the drinks! That's a 2km walk along a bounded road with the scab van crawling behind. The Union President said no (apparently picketers would fall under the van). The van departed.

Two guys were arrested but the wharfies spontaneously laid siege to the police behind the gate and took up the call to have them released. At some point Les stepped aside with the police and negotiated their release. But first every one had to disperse. To our astonishment the police did actually honour the deal and let the guys go.

The best moment of that day was after most folk had gone home. Owens were transporting their machinery away. Some wimmin were waiting for them at a pub across from the port gates and pelted the windscreens with eggs. It was just heartening to see that folk can organise themselves when free to do so.

I'm writing this on the 29th Jan. To date:

- \* No public meeting has been initiated by the WWU to build broad based community support.
  - \* No tactics meeting have been organised by the WWU to explore effective picket options.
  - \* No vans have been delayed at any South Island port, so CHH have not lost a penny through delayed loading.
  - \* The WWU have not approached Owens, who operate the machinery on all ports, and without whom NO loading is possible.
- Many of us will continue to plug away at the WWU leadership, but at the end of the day, with ever increasing numbers of police present at pickets, it's going to take numbers and DEMOCRATIC modes of organising to stop CHH and their cronies.
- ellypocrem

.....

Around the South Island tyres on vehicles carrying scabs have been slashed...

## LET'S WIN THIS ONE

The stakes in the waterfront war are high. If casualisation is introduced over the dead body of what has traditionally been one of New Zealand's most militant unions then it may well spread until it affects every part of the workforce.

Of course, we shouldn't expect that the Labour Party will stop the imposition of casualisation. Helen Clark has already said that she realises the importance of CHH as one of the largest companies in New Zealand, a statement which amounts to an admission that she refuses to upset their profit margin. At her urging, WWU leaders and CHH have gone to 'mediation' over the dispute, a move which Clark hopes will take the wind out of the wharfies' sails by substituting paperwork for their direct action and shifting the public gaze from the waterfront.

For his part, Alliance head honcho and Deputy Prime Minister Jim Anderton is so committed to the wharfies' cause that he was reportedly courting "leaders in the wood industry", including Carter Holt hacks, in the same week in late January that picketers in Nelson were being batoned and arrested by riot police. Apparently Anderton, anxious to secure the capitalists' 'cooperation' with his forestry-based 'regional development' scheme for poor communities on the East Coast of the North Island, feels it inadvisable to say anything in public about their attacks on poor communities in several regions of the South Island!

Helen and Jim and their buddies in the CTU leadership can't win the waterside war for workers, but direct action and widespread solidarity can.

- Toby, Scott and Kirsty

## 50 years ago...

The recent attack by CHH on watersiders has revived memories of the 1951 waterfront lockout, the largest and most widespread industrial dispute in New Zealand history. Ironically, February 2001 marks the 50th anniversary of the 1951 waterfront lockout. Well, some things don't change; 50 years on and it's still class war on the waterfront as capitalists yet again try to smash the Watersiders Workers' Union.

### POLICE STATE, NEW ZEALAND STYLE 1951

Eight thousand wharfies and 12,000 supporting strikers were locked out of their jobs for 151 days (or five months) from 15 February to 15 July 1951. After the entire waterfront workforce was dismissed, the then National government declared a state of emergency, curtailed freedom of the press by making it illegal to publicise the workers point of view, curtailed free speech by incredibly making it illegal to even voice an opinion in support of the locked out workers, and made it illegal to hold street protests or support or aid locked out workers and their families. Three thousand soldiers were drafted in to do the jobs of watersiders on the waterfront. Union bureaucrats of the FOL sided with the government against the locked out workers. The Labour Party did not support the locked out workers, giving implicit support to the police state that existed in 1951 in New Zealand.

### SYNDICALIST INFLUENCE

In the end the WWU was defeated, but only after a long and bitter struggle. The militant sections of the union movement were smashed, introducing a lull in class conflict that lasted nearly 20 years. In the early 1950s militant unions such as the WWU were strongly influenced by



syndicalism, a close cousin of leftist anarchism which aims for democratic, revolutionary unions not controlled by union bureaucrats but controlled from below by ordinary, rank and file workers. Jock Barnes, then president of the WWU, has written "the Waterside Workers' Union, particularly the Auckland branch, had a strong syndicalist philosophy" (see "Jock Barnes and the Syndicalist Tradition in New Zealand", *Thrall* #14). This exposes the myth that many right-wingers and even leftists believe today, namely that the WWU was strongly influenced by the Communist Party of New Zealand (who were then Stalinists). The WWU was largely, and often fiercely, independent of CPNZ influence.

Although the WWU had did not claim to be a revolutionary union, it did have many syndicalist features. It had an active rather than passive rank and file. WWU meetings were very well attended and elections were regular. The syndicalist influence on the WWU made it a militant, fighting union that could hold out for so long in the face of a combined attack from capitalism and the state. We dearly need today unions like the WWU of 1951.

Reunions are being held in Auckland and Wellington. There is a free exhibition of the '51 lockout at the Film Centre in Wellington from early March to late May.

Further reading/viewing about the '51 lockout: Dick Scott, *151 Days*, Christchurch: Labour Reprint Society, 1977; Jock Barnes, *Never a White Flag*, Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1998 (available from the Freedom Shop, address p. 2); and *Shattered Dreams*, video documentary, Wellington: Trade Union History Project, 1990.

## waihopai – uncle sam's balls of doom

About 50 people ('a good turnout' according to Greens MP Keith Locke), including a contingent of anarchist pacifist Catholic Workers protested outside the Waihopai spybase near Blenheim on the weekend of January 20/21. The annual protest, organised by the Anti-Bases Campaign, included a ceremony in Blenheim where passports were stamped for the "Undemocratic Republic of UKUSA". UKUSA is the US controlled US, UK, Canada,

Australia and New Zealand spy network that runs the Echelon spy system of which Waihopai is a key feature. It is from here that they intercept all email, fax and telephone messages across the Pacific and filter for keywords. At the base itself a campaign was launched against the Swain bill which is due to go to parliament late this year. If passed it will allow the police and 'intelligence' forces to hack into anyone's computer legally. For more information contact the ABC PO Box 2258 Christchurch. – Grant

## eminem and the prolephobes

## GRAMMIES FOR EMINEM?

A remarkable wave of hysteria has broken over the recent decision of American music industry bigwigs to nominate Eminem, the 27 year-old Detroit-born self-proclaimed "meanest MC on this earth", for four Grammy 'achievement' Awards, including one for 'Album of the Year'. Groups claiming to represent women, gays, and "moral citizens" have united to campaign against these nominations, which they consider "irresponsible".

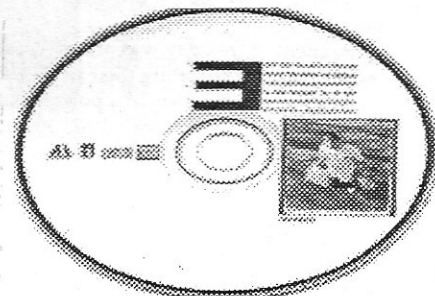
With subjects ranging from incest to domestic violence to casual murder, Eminem's 'Marshall Mathers LP' has probably already won him the coveted title of Hip-hop's Foulest Whiney Whiteboy Mouth. Even more importantly, it has sold close to eight million copies in the United States in less than a year. Figures like that don't please the likes of Jean Garry, executive director of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), a stateside lobby group with a small, wealthy membership and a hefty advertising budget. Garry, who has threatened to shut down Eminem performances with protest action, has slated those who nominated Eminem for "ignoring" the "hateful lyrics" on the "disgusting" Marshall Mathers LP. GLAAD has been joined in its anti-Eminem campaign by several small 'feminist' groups and a slew of opportunistic politicians. Opposition to the rapper is not confined to the US. Valerie Smith, a self-described 'community activist' in Toronto, last year filed a complaint with that city's Hate Crimes Squad over Eminem's lyrics, in an effort to have them banned. Smith's complaint, which has been referred by the Squad to Canada's Attorney-General, could lead to Canadians who listen to Eminem being judged guilty of 'Hate Crimes' described in Federal Law. Michael Bryant, a conservative Canadian MP, has shared Smith's bandwagon by appealing for new legislation to ban minors from buying "objectionable" material from music stores. Defending this call, Bryant claimed that "It is time for us to consider whether we apply the same standard to the music industry that we apply to the film industry. If this [Eminem's music] was played in a movie, the movie would be

restricted....Parents would get to decide whether their kids get to hear this music". Bryant's calls for censorship have been echoed in New Zealand by far right groups like the Christian Heritage Party and the neo-fascist League of Rights, as well as by members of some allegedly left-wing organisations. For his part, Eminem seems able to laugh at his notoriety: the following lines are drawn from a song he cheekily titled 'Remember Me?':

*When I go out, I'm a gonna go out shootin'/  
don't mean when I die, I mean when I go out to  
the club, stupid/I'm tryin' to clear up my  
fuckin' image, so I promised the fuckin critics/I  
wouldn't say "fuckin" for six minutes.*

## A MUZZLE FOR EMINEM?

The issue of the censorship of offensive music has special resonance for New Zealanders, who have experienced the musical talents of True Bliss, Paul Holmes and Rikki Morris at a closer range than the rest of the world. I'm not sure if *Thr@ll* as a sovereign entity has a line on this whole Eminem business, but I'm certainly going to put in my five cents' worth here. I'm going to begin by acknowledging that it's probably a fair bet that Eminem's not a very nice boy – anyone who is being sued by his own Mum would seem, surely, to be suffering from a severe charisma deficit. Nor can it be denied that some of the subjects of Eminem's songs are very unpleasant. As I see it, though, a patronising, very middle class attitude to the 'proles' – the young working class people who constitute the Marshall Mathers LP's core audience – is evident in the campaign to ban Eminem from music stores and bedroom walls. 'Expert' after 'expert' has testified to the ability of the rapper's music to exert a 'negative influence' on his

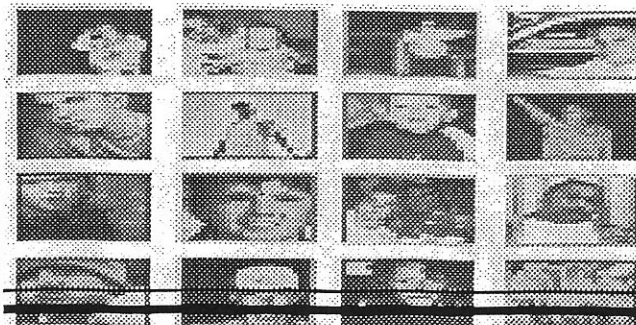


'fans'. The implication, surely, is that these people, often referred to by their betters as "white trash" or "trailer park trash" are incapable of telling the difference between art and life – between art and instruction to act – in the way that those who visit the opera or read sonnets can. Do we ever hear the middle class prolephobes complaining about the sexism in Shakespeare's 'The Taming of the Shrew' or the anti-semitism in TS Eliot's poetry or the German militarism that courses through the music of Wagner, Hitler's favourite composer? The unstated assumption, of course, is that these are works of 'high' art, made to be enjoyed by people of 'taste', people immune to the 'negative influence' Eminem wields over his simpleminded audience.

Eminem himself has made it clear that he does not wish to 'influence' his listeners positively or negatively, and has denied that his lyrics aim to be taken as statements of misogynistic, homophobic or pro-violence beliefs. "I just put my music out there and whatever people want to think of it they can think of it," he said last year. "But I think, for the most part, the kids get it. They understand it. I haven't heard of any instances where somebody raped a girl listening to my album or shot somebody listening to my lyrics." Perhaps Eminem is putting this another way when he raps, on his brilliant track 'The Real Slim Shady':

*Yeah, I probably gotta coupla  
screws loose/ But no worse, than  
what's goin' on in your parents'  
bedrooms.*

Another thing worth remembering when we consider the outcry against Eminem is





the historic tendency of all halfway-decent art to piss *someone* off. The most derogatory words in the vocabulary of art critics – here I'm thinking of little daggers like 'kitschy', 'cheesey', 'twee' and so on – tend to conjure up images not of offence but of awful niceness. Britney Spears and Pam Ayres and Gilbert and Sullivan are twee, Eminem and the Velvet Underground and Caravaggio are (or were) offensive. Which category, I wonder, would you pick your entertainment from? Leftists should, I would argue, stand up for the right of artists to shock, disgust and (most importantly!) produce good art.

#### THE LABOUR PARTY: PROLEPHOBES IN POWER?

I'm now going to try and draw a rather long bow, so to speak, by attempting to relate the Eminem furore to what I see as a wider political trend. It's worth noting that the organisations involved in the anti-Eminem campaign are not popular, much less democratic outfits. They are clusters of media-savvy middle and upper class 'activists' who enjoy speaking out on behalf of various minority groups.

him, stuff like selling a bottle of beer without a license and stealing a pillow, these are the sort of things that horrify middle class liberals like Helen Clark, whereas working class people don't give a fuck", *revolution* writer Phil Ferguson noted. "Working class so-called 'yob' culture in general is something that gives Labour the creeps – we should remember here that it was the middle class that supplied the world with missionaries."

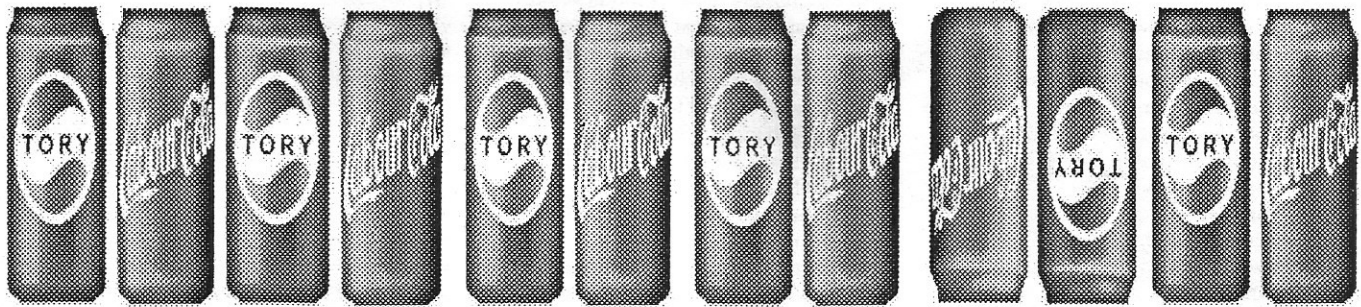
#### RUN OUT OF CARROTS? THERE'S ALWAYS THE STICK!

To really understand the source of the virulence of prolephobia, we need to understand the position of the groups that, I have argued, are its main sponsors – the social democratic 'Labour' parties of the West. These parties have always played the role of 'good cop' in a 'good cop, bad cop' routine played out with openly right-wing parties. When the Tories' shrilly pro-rich policies have become too much for the vast majority of the population, a Labour government has appeared and offered contrary rhetoric and a few reforms as carrots to the restive proles. In the era of

by moral hectoring and law and order 'crackdowns' (I used that word just for you, Mr Goff), rather than the redistribution of resources from the rich to the poor.

'Tory' Tony Blair, idol of Helen Clark's Labour Party, is probably the most extreme example of the new breed of prolephobic wowsers in power – recently his government decided that, instead of giving financial assistance to poor families in an effort to help the 33% of British kids who live in poverty, it would award every newly-wed couple in the country with a free guidebook to a 'successful marriage'. 'Tony's Lucky Tips' for young couples, as some wag dubbed it, was too much for even some of his own MPs to stomach. One dissident, banchbencher Anne Yates, complained that "there has never been a government as interested as this one in poking its nose into people's private lives". If only she knew why...

Whenever the platitudes of guidebooks aren't enough to guarantee social control, Blair is quite happy to bring in the strong arm of the law, as a bill unveiled in the UK just this week makes clear. The so-called 'Anti-Crime Bill' seeks to establish a 'child



'Feminists' amongst them, for instance, are the upwardly-mobile 'liberal feminists' who cheered the high ratings of *Murphy Brown* and, later, the appointment of Madeline Albright as Clinton's Secretary of State as 'great steps forward' for women. Groups with this sort of orientation are interested in carving a niche for a select few members of minority groups – the Murphy Browns and Madeline Albrights – in society's privileged strata, not in genuinely representing the needs of minority groups. They are, in short, organisations of the middle class, the 'administrative, managerial' class situated between the ruling class of suits and corporate hacks and the working class which makes up the overwhelming majority of society.

The political embodiment of the middle class in New Zealand politics is the Labour Party led by Headmistress Helen Clark, and it is intriguing to note the similarities between what has been called the 'new moral wowsers' of the Labour administration with the antics of Eminem's critics. Noting that "the middle class has always been more afraid of the class under it than the class above it", *revolution* magazine recently linked Clark's ongoing crusade against Dover Samuels to her 'moral wowsers'. "The things that Dover has criminal convictions for, the things that Clark and co. regard as black marks against

shrinking governments and globalisation, however, Labour parties are hard-pressed to come up with any carrots. Big-money investors and international financial organisations like the IMF and World Bank are only too eager to admit their distaste for the "economic consequences" of "expensive" reforms like benefit increases, new hospitals and job schemes. Faced with this reality, Helen Clark and her social democratic peers around the world – names like Tony Blair, Gerhard Schröder and Bill Clinton spring to mind, here – have fastened onto moralism and repressive legislation as inexpensive ways of attempting to paper over the dissent and social divisions that must almost inevitably exist in an era of chronic mass unemployment and a declining real average wage. Prolephobia comes cheaper than Keynes.

Interestingly, prolephobia is increasingly manifesting itself in the thought processes of social democrat academics and policy analysts. In the last decade, for instance, a growing literature on 'Social Exclusion' has marked the musty publications of moral philosophers and sociologists. Where the previous generation of social democrats talked of tax hikes and increased spending on social services as a solution to poverty, political apathy and crime, Social Exclusionists see things in moral terms. For them, poverty is a moral, not a social ill: the despair and crime it creates are best tackled

curfew' and give the police the power to fine sixteen and seventeen year-olds caught 'drunk in public' 100 Pounds. In language reminiscent of Eminem's critics, Home Minister Jack Straw – the man who let General Pinochet go home – has defended the bill as "a crackdown on teenage yob culture". Like his Tory predecessor, who tried to ban 'youth rave events' and 'caravans of alternative lifestyles', Straw is a middle class missionary. His Bill is an attempt to curtail the growing willingness of British youth to say 'Up Yours' to Straw and his book of petty laws. Perhaps the last word should go to Eminem, who has found a remarkable number of variations on the phrase 'Up Yours'. Here is the conclusion to 'The Real Slim Shady', available on that Grammy-nominated 'Marshall Mathers LP':

*And every single person is a Slim Shady  
lurkin/He could be workin at Burger King,  
spittin on your onion rings/Or in the parkin  
lot, circling Screaming "I don't give a fuck!"/  
with his windows down and his system up/ So,  
will the real Shady please stand up?/And put  
one of those fingers on each hand up?/And be  
proud to be outta your mind and outta control/  
Ha ha Guess there's a Slim Shady in all of us/  
Fuck it, let's all stand up*

– Scott

# glimpses of an alternative society

## an encounter with the spanish anarchists part 2

IN THE last issue of *Thr@ll* we published an excerpt from Werner Droescher's unpublished manuscript "Toward an Alternative Society" (1978). Droescher was an anarchist who lived in New Zealand from 1940 till his death in 1978, apart from a brief spell in Australia. In the last episode, Droescher had just joined the POUM militia to fight against the fascists in Aragon in Spain in 1936...

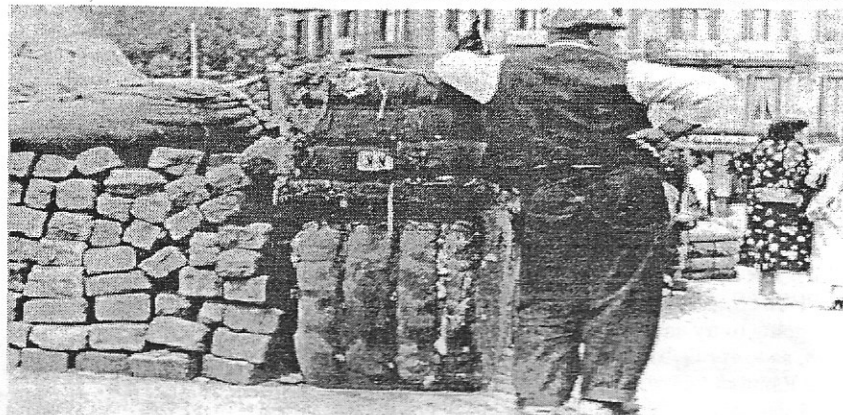
**T**he secretiveness, the intriguing, the nasty political manoeuvres of the communists began to give me an uneasy feeling. I began to get the idea that none of their actions meant what they pretended to be. I found the communist, as a person, a most unsympathetic figure – with a few exceptions who invariably found themselves in disgrace, such as Tom Wintringham. The coms were knowalls who claimed the absolute truth of their political convictions. They were ambitious, powerlusting politicians. Once, when I had to visit their headquarters in Barcelona, I got a shock when I found there two Germans in prominent positions, whose criminal backgrounds were well known to me. I could not reconcile their presence with the cause they were serving.

Other foreigners had turned up in the Hotel Falcon, who had come to fight in the war. We were fitted out with mechanics' overalls, the "mono", each was issued with a rifle and cartridge belt. One day a platoon was complete.

### TO THE FRONT

G. [Greville Texidor] had meanwhile obtained a perfectly legal divorce from her Catalan husband; she was free to marry again. It was a form of war-marriage ceremony that we went through, whose international legality was rather dubious, so that we had no qualms about concealing it from authorities in other countries. The day after our wedding, the group climbed on a small truck and set off for Aragon. It was a little International Brigade in miniature – long before the famous International Brigade of the Communists had come into existence. We were four Frenchmen – one of them had been a professional soldier – two Swiss – a young man and a girl – two Hungarians, Antonion the Italian, and myself; a little band of upright anti-fascists, bravely going to war.

In the Catalan villages, we were cheered. There was still buoyant enthusiasm for the revolution and the war. As we reached the flat land beyond Lerida and were travelling through the Aragon countryside, the mood of the people was quite different. These were districts of large estates and bonded peasants. The seriousness of the guards at the local checkpoints reflected the gravity of the social conflict in that area. There had been bitter fighting against the property owners and their allies, the police and the



バルセロナの街頭に築かれたバリケード (1936年7月)

clergy. Again and again we were told of shootings and executions.

### IN THE FIRING LINE

The headquarters of the Second Column was in Caspe – the First Column was advancing on the Northern bank of the Ebro, led by the Anarchist leader Durruti. We pleaded to be sent to a larger unit of the POUM which was stationed in the neighbourhood, but the Anarchist Ortiz, who was the spokesman of that sector, declined our request with a curt and pointed question: "Have you come to engage in politics, or to fight?" The following day a new "centuria", a com-

Republican forces in 1938.

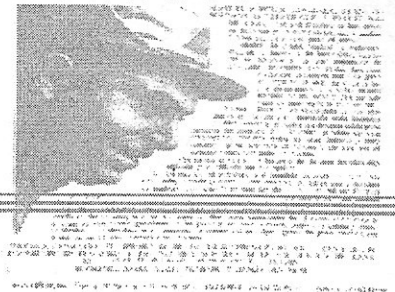
### THE ANARCHISTS RETURN

For the next few days we, the recent arrivals, were the sole defenders of the village, because the Anarchists had temporarily departed to attack the little town of Belchite, which lay to the South. They did not succeed in taking it; much later it was taken and completely destroyed by the Republican Army. When the Anarchists returned after their unsuccessful action, I got to know them properly. It was more than an encounter, but became a real, vital experience. In the lifestyle of the Anarchists I found everything that had been missing among the communists: a truly social behaviour of the individual, a form of organisation in which men were free but would agree voluntarily to restrictions limiting their freedom. This became evident when we, as part of the "garrison", took part in the first meeting of the militia. There were fierce arguments, obstinate assertions – yet the general tone of the meeting was one of tolerance, even when the most outrageous and farfetched opinions were uttered. The decisions were not made by majority vote, but somebody – usually one of the elected delegates – interpreted the general consensus of opinion, which was accepted as binding.

This seemingly chaotic procedure did surprise me. I realised later that those Anarchists whose philosophical convictions had become an integral part of their personalities possessed certain spiritual mechanisms which inhibited the egotism of the individual and activated the will to find a solution beneficial for the whole group. Our group consisted of Spaniards from the South of Spain, who had come to Barcelona to find work – even among these so volatile and usually emotionally uncontrolled people, this restrained behaviour had become second nature. This was confirmed to me many times after I had shared their life for a considerable time.

– Werner Droescher (Part 3 will appear in the next issue of *Thr@ll*).

**Tierra y Libertad**  
DURRUTI



pany, was made up of us and other small groups that had arrived in Caspe, and were sent by train to La Zaida, which was then the Front. Sure enough, at the exit of the village was a sign which simply said "Firing Line!" A battery of light artillery was in position and there were three other Centurias, two of them Anarchist. We soon discovered that the word "Firing Line" only meant that from the village onwards there was No-man's Land; the enemy, the fascists, had dug themselves in at "Quinto" about ten to fifteen kilometres distant, after having been driven out of their positions on the hills overlooking La Zaida. This village remained the Front until the end of the Civil War, until the military collapse of the